

# Preserving Forest Grove

Newsletter of the Historic Landmarks Board

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## A Brief History of Forest Grove Lu'aus

By  
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(with contributions by Ashley Montibon)

A luau (properly written "Lu'au" in Hawaiian) is a Hawaiian feast. It features food, such as poi and kalua pig, beer and entertainment. Hawaiian music and hula are also featured. Among people from Hawaii, the concepts of "luau" and "party" are often synonymous.

The term Lu'au arrived into the popular lexicon around 150 years ago. It is actually, in Hawaiian and other Polynesian languages, the name for the taro leaf which when young and small is cooked like spinach and is often mixed with other foods creating Hawaiian favorites such as Lu'au squid or Lu'au chicken.

Forest Grove has indirectly hosted its own Lu'au for the last 50 years. Most of Forest Grove doesn't realize this. The vast majority of Pacific University's Hawaii students do. They have been vibrant and active collaborators in the Lu'au since 1960.

Pacific University's Lu'au was established so that members of the newly formed Hawaii club could earn scholarships to help finance their education. Beginning in 1961 \$250-\$500 was awarded each year to five club members. The scholarships were discontinued in 1985 when students' financial aid packages began to be affected. Since then, proceeds from the Lu'au have been donated to various charities, such as the Special Olympics and muscular

dystrophy, and to other causes.

The founder of the Hawaii Club and of Pacific's Lu'au was Dr. Fred Scheller. He was a professor at Pacific, lead the speech team, founded Boxer Radio, and played a significant role in bringing Hawaii students together. He was actively involved in Pacific's Lu'au even after his retirement—except for two or three occasions, he attended all 50 Lu'aus. Dr. Scheller died on May 10, 2010.

The traditional Lu'au feast in Hawaii was once referred to as the 'aha'aina, or, Gathering for a Meal. This feast celebrated many events including young adults' coming of age and the arrival of visitors. Historically, according to [www.polynesia.com](http://www.polynesia.com), the food and practices observed at an 'aha'aina were rich with symbolism. The entire event was designed to unite the participants, similar to the way the old Hawaiians braided strands of coconut husk fiber, or sennit, into thicker 'aha cords and rope. Certain foods might represent strength, while the names or attributes of other food items might relate to virtues or goals the participants hoped to achieve.

In ancient Hawaii it was the custom for men and women to eat their meals apart. In addition, the ancient Hawaiian religion forbade commoners and women of all ranks from eating certain kinds of foods, such as

bananas, coconuts and several species of fish.

**Port, banana, coconuts and several species of fish were forbidden to Hawaiian women...**

This changed in 1819 when King

Kamehameha II abolished these laws and many other religious laws. The feast where the King ate with the women was the symbolic act which ended the Hawaiian religious taboos. This was the birth of the Lu'au.

Ashley Montibon, a recent Pacific graduate and Hawaii Club member, says, "Pacific's Lu'au incorporates authentic and customary expressions of the Polynesian islands through dance, cuisine, atmosphere, and aloha spirit. We strive to keep our title, known to many, as the best Lu'au west of the Mississippi."

Pete Erschen, a Hawaii Club faculty advisor, also has an opinion: "I think people respect our Lu'au, because when people come, even from the mainland, they are awestruck. Their jaw is on the floor because it's not what they expected or had in their mind. They didn't think that a bunch of college students were capable of putting together a two hour show [let alone complex] dances that are culturally authentic, reflective of so many different cultures..."

The traditional Lu'au feast was eaten on the floor. Lauhala mats were rolled out and a beautiful centerpiece made of ti leaves, ferns and native flowers about three feet wide was laid the length of the mat. Bowls filled with poi, a staple of the Hawaiian diet made from pounded taro root, and platters of meat were set out. Dry foods like sweet potatoes, salt, dried fish or meat covered in leaves were laid directly on the clean ti leaves.

"Much to the consternation of the proper

Victorian visitors," says [www.hawaii-luau.com](http://www.hawaii-luau.com), "utensils were never used at a Lu'au; instead, everything was eaten with the fingers. Poi of various consistencies got its name from the number of fingers needed to eat it...three finger, two finger, or the thickest, one finger poi." A guest at King Kalakaua's coronation Lu'au in 1883 described the lavish decorations typical of the traditional Lu'au. "Tables were draped with white, but the entire tops were covered with ferns and leaves massed together so as almost to form a tablecloth of themselves; quantities of flowers were placed about mingling with the ferns...The natives had turned out in great numbers, and the scent of their leis of flowers and maile leaves was almost overpowering."

These royal Lu'aus tended to be big. One of the largest ever was hosted by Kamehameha III in 1847. The list of foods prepared included 271 hogs, 482 large calabashes of poi, 3,125 salt fish, 1,820 fresh fish, 2,245 coconuts, 4,000 taro plants and numerous other delicacies. King Kalakaua, who was known as the "Merry Monarch" for his love of parties and dance, invited over 1500 guests to his 50th birthday Lu'au.

Pacific's Lu'au guest list is usually considerably shorter than the "Merry Monarch's." However, "There is NO other college or university that puts on a show as grand and special... providing [students] an opportunity to represent something bigger than themselves, their family and their own island" says graduate Kyle Dobashi.

Roy Hirokawa, another graduate, explains



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the Lu'au's aloha spirit: "It came from the heart and people felt that. It was never to be commercial to just raise money, that was secondary. It was because we loved who we are and what we are. They felt the spirit and the manna we had. It was genuine. We gave freely of that."

Pacific's 50th annual Lu'au took place at the Forest Grove campus on Saturday, April 10. Ticket prices ranged from \$17 to \$30. The public was, as usual, invited. The Lu'au was, as usual, completely sold out.

### Walker-Naylor Historic District Update

Back in 2008 you may recall a newsletter article regarding a project being conducted by the Historic Landmarks Board. The City had hired a consultant to update the history of the Walker's and Naylor's



neighborhoods for the purpose of applying for and creating another National Register Historic District.

The research effort is nearly complete; the consultant has almost completed preparing an application to nominate significant parts of these neighborhoods as a National Register Historic District. If

approved, this would be Forest Grove's third historic district (the Clark District was approved in 2002, and Painter's Woods in 2009). We hope to submit this application to the State Historic

Preservation Office in July. Once reviewed by their staff, the application would be presented to the State Advisory Committee on Historic Preservation in October. If the SACHP approves, the nomination would then be forwarded to the National Park Service in Washington, D.C. If approved by the NPS, the new district could be announced early in 2011.

In the meantime, the consultant is continuing her research, aided by members of the Historic Landmarks Board. How can you help? If you live in either of these neighborhoods, and if you have any documents or photographs pertaining to the history of your home, please bring them to City Hall for copying. This will save researchers the work and expense of finding this information elsewhere.

If you have any comments about the nomination or the proposed boundary, please contact James Reitz, Senior Planner at (503) 992-3233 or at [jreitz@forestgrove-or.gov](mailto:jreitz@forestgrove-or.gov). You may also make your comments directly to the Historic Landmarks Board. The Board next meets on June 22 @ 6 pm in the Community Auditorium Conference Room (1915 Main Street).

### 2010 Eric G. Stewart Award Presented

The Eric G. Stewart Award is presented by the Historic Landmarks Board to recognize outstanding service and support of historic preservation in Forest Grove. This year we present the award to Committee for the Preservation of the A. T. Smith Property.

The Committee is being recognized for their continuing efforts to preserve and protect the A. T. Smith House. Most recently, the Committee successfully completed the purchase of the property and paid off the mortgage, thereby ensuring it's continued protection. Thanks!

Mary Jo Morelli-Chair

Tom Carlson

Grant Davis

Barry Wilson

Marie Mather



### ***The Forest Grove Historic Landmarks Board Grant Program***

Is your house on our local register? If it is, did you know that your house is eligible for restoration / rehabilitation grant funding? The Historic Landmarks Board has funds to help you with your projects. If you are planning any exterior restoration work such as restoring architectural features or if you have structural work to do such a foundation repair, we'd love to help. We fund projects up to 50% of the cost of the job per grant. Come see us! We can also help you find historically appropriate solutions to any problems you may have.

### ***The Forest Grove Historic Landmarks Board***

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**Preserving Forest Grove** is a quarterly newsletter published by the Forest Grove Historic Landmarks Board to help fulfill its duty of public education regarding the preservation of cultural resources. If you would like to be on the mailing list, please call James Reitz at 503-992-3233, or [jreitz@forestgrove-or.gov](mailto:jreitz@forestgrove-or.gov).

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